## ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the identification and use of a family of human complement C3-degrading proteinases expressed by *S. pneumoniae*. The proteinase has a molecular weight of about 24 kD to about 34 kD as determined on a 10% SDS polyacrylamide gel. A preferred proteinase of this invention includes the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:2.